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A Tropical Colonization Experiment in Mexico

Charles Ray Alban

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A TROPICAL COLONIZATION EXPERIMENT IN MEXICO

by

Charles Ray Alban

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Political Science

Approved:

Major Professor

Head of Department

Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1965
PREFACE

When I originally thought of this project for use as a thesis topic, my only knowledge of it was from a brief conversation with a friend in Mexico City during the spring of 1963, soon after the first colonists had gone to the Zone of the Rivers. My attempts to obtain information in the United States met with little success so that when I arrived in Mexico to begin my study, I was rather in the dark as to what to expect. I had tentatively planned to concentrate on the politico-economic aspects of the colonization experiment, but I soon discovered that it was much too early in the stage of development to single out areas of study and arrive at valid conclusions. Consequently, my approach turned toward a more general study of the project. Nevertheless, I have attempted to indicate the politico-socio-economic ramifications that became apparent to me during my study and too brief stay in the Zone of the Rivers.

It would be interesting to return to the Zone of the Rivers in two years time, or perhaps even less, and see what progress has been wrought and how the colonists have finally adjusted to their new life.

I am very deeply indebted to many people for their many kindnesses and their helpfulness to me in my attempt to gather information for this study. I am particularly grateful to
Francisco López Serrano, Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population, without whose good offices this study could not have been made, and to his assistant, Licenciado Francisco de la Rosa, who surely must have become tired of my frequent visits to his office and my many questions, but who cheerfully assisted me in every way. My thanks are also due to Ingeniero Severino Mendoza, who was of indispensable help during my visit to the Zone of the Rivers, and to Ingeniero Raul Miravete, whose opinions and comments I prize. I also wish to gratefully acknowledge the help given by Anthony Bowman, a student of U. S. U. who accompanied me to the Zone of the Rivers, in interviewing the colonists.

Charles Ray Alban
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CHAPTER I
THE BEGINNING

La tierra es de todos, como
el aire, el agua, la luz, y
el color del sol.*

One day in March 1963 in the city of Torreón, State of Coahuila, Mexico, a group of 492 heads of families said goodbye to their wives, children, relatives, and friends, and boarded a train to begin a long journey south and east to a new and, they desperately hoped, better life, with land of their own to work and to love. It would be almost a full year before the families would be reunited in a new and different environment.

This was the vanguard of a bold, new colonization experiment which the Mexican government was starting and which, if successful, would pave the way for the movement of 150,000 landless farm families from the North-Central and Northern overpopulated areas of Mexico to the underpopulated, tropical State of Campeche where rainfall is abundant and the soil productive. In addition, in an attempt to take care of the estimated 600,000 landless families who, under the Constitution and laws of Mexico, are entitled to land, plans

*The land is for all, like the air, the water, the light, and the heat of the sun. (Inscription carved above the entrance to the Secretaría de Educación, Mexico City.)
are being made for colonization in the States of Chiapas and Tabasco and in the Territory of Quintana Roo. These colonization projects are all designed under the ejido system which Mexico has made famous.¹

This initial movement of campesinos (farmers) from the arid, plateau region of North-Central Mexico was the culmination of many months of planning directed by the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population,² Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization. It also marked the beginning of the struggle to prove the practicability of the venture through actual transplanting of people to a new and strange land.³

¹An ejido (pronounced ā-heé-do) is a semicollective landholding community. For the convenience of readers who may not be familiar with the ejido system in Mexico, a brief treatment of ejido development, definition, organization, and credit is contained in chapter iii below.

²This office was known as the Office of the Secretary General of Colonization and National Lands until January 1, 1964, when the name was changed as indicated above. The functions and responsibilities remained the same.

³Unless otherwise indicated, the information contained in this chapter was derived from personal interviews with Licenciado Francisco de la Rosa and other members of the staff of the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population, Mexico City, during the months of May and June 1964. In addition, some of the material was obtained from an unpublished plan prepared by the Office of Agro­nomical Technical Studies of the same agency, concerning studies made of the proposed colonization zone.
Figure 1.--Map of Mexico showing states

- Railroad Torreon-Candelaria
- Mexico City

States Indicated by Numbers
1 Aguascalientes
2 Guanajuato
3 México
4 Distrito Federal
5 Tlaxcala
6 Morelos
7 Colima
8 Querétaro
9 Hidalgo
The Problem

When Francisco López Serrano, Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population, received authority for the establishment of new centers of population in 1961, it was with the hope, and indeed with the expectation, that this would proved to be one of the major solutions to the critical problem facing the nation of finding and providing land for the landless rural population.

The problem of the landless campesinos has been with the government for many years and is basically historical. It has many aspects springing from its historical background which make its solution of utmost and immediate importance. They are psychological, sociological, economic, political, and biological.4

Historically, there were three centuries of domination and exploitation by the Spanish and Creoles, and this was continued even after the independence of Mexico by the Creoles and a few powerful mestizos. This exploitation deformed the farmers' mentality until the condition of servitude was taken

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4 This and the following related paragraphs are the substance of a conversation held by the writer with Lic. de la Rosa in which he stated that the points of view made here are those of government officials and that the government is dedicated to the betterment of the conditions which hold the people in such bondage. For similar viewpoints see, among others, Frank Tannenbaum, Mexico: The Struggle for Peace and Bread (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 16-19. Nathan L. Whetten's Rural Mexico (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), contains an illuminating chapter entitled "Rural Cultural Mission," on this subject.
as a natural state. This induced a negative influence in
the peasants' psychology, making them intellectually im-
mature, comparable to children, but without inherent curi-
osity or questioning attitudes. They suffered from hunger
and/or malnutrition with the physical consequences, and con-
formed without ambition or appetite for education, cultural
betterment, or socio-economic progress.

The centuries of repression, of living (if it can be
called living) from day to day without the expectancy of a
better life have instilled the majority of the people with
an apathy that sometimes resists efforts to improve their
social and cultural structure. Each day is lived in itself,
without hope for the future, for what is the sense of hope
if one knows that tomorrow will be another today—a day of
hunger and poverty as was today, the day before today, and
all the days in memory.

The people have heard many words of promise over a long
period of years that their lot in life would soon be im-
proved. They do not believe such promises, since so few of
them have been found to be true. They struggle for the price
of a lottery ticket so that they can become rich overnight
and live as the more well-to-do people live and have material
things they have seen but which seem so unattainable.  

5 This is true only in those areas where the lottery is
known and tickets are available. Thousands of people in
remote areas have never heard of the lottery nor, in fact,
have they knowledge of many of the material niceties of life.
look upon the government as a "father" and expect the government to take care of them as indeed the government attempts to do. They are without ambition because ambition without opportunity for betterment is nothing. There is a Mexican saying, "Do not leave for tomorrow what can be put off until after tomorrow." This might be interpreted as their creed, if they have a creed, that is the summation of their life and existence.

Frank Tannenbaum has aptly expressed the characteristic fatalism of the Mexican people to the reality of life. Indeed, many Mexicans, if not all, believe that their existence is a transitory thing, to be accepted only as a day to day fact that might be terminated at any moment.

Psychologically the Mexican milieu is underlaid with an ingrained morbidity that derives from the traumatic character of Mexican experience. All of life, personal, social, political, and even cultural, is burdened by the expectancy of sudden injury, violence, and death. The very physical environment seems to fit in with this description of the universe. The sudden earthquake, the unexpected, newly born volcano, the rapid change of weather that in an hour turns a balmy warmth to shivering cold accompanied by a flood of water pouring down from the sky, or that brings the hard wind-driven hail that flattens the crop are common experiences. Equally certain is the sudden disease—even if only smallpox or typhoid—that takes the little children away and leaves the schoolhouse empty. Above all, there is the possible appearance of armed men who rob and kill and destroy. There is a kind of expectancy of death—sudden and meaningless—that makes fatalism and indifference to life a common feature of all classes. . . . Life really has no sense of permanence. All existence is on the verge of disaster. This peculiar fatalism results in a feeling that tomorrow, mañana, will be time enough, if there is a tomorrow. It tempers every act, every belief, every arrangement, every compromise.6

6Tannenbaum, pp. 16-17.
Because the social dynamism of these people is weak, the society in action persists in suffering through its deficiencies in spite of the governmental attempts to liberate it from its traditional lethargy and to instill a sense of dignity and denial of servitudious attitudes.

The landless rural people, although long accustomed to minimal or below minimum subsistence wages (a farm laborer's annual average wage is approximately 48 cents per day because he averages only four months work annually), are potentially a source of political unrest and dissatisfaction with attendant demonstrations, disorderliness, and lack of public tranquility. In fact, there are many incidents involving agrarian unrest at the present time. For example, the Mexico City newspaper, The News, reported on June 23, 1964, that the State of Vera Cruz was fearing violence and bloodshed among farm groups as a result of the invasion of various farms by 300 armed squatters. In order to avoid clashes and bloodshed the state government ordered police squads to assist federal troops in disarming all farmers while investigations are being carried out. In the meantime, the National Livestock Growers Confederation was urging distribution of some 11 million hectares (1 hectare equals 2.471 acres) of land allegedly available in the country's southeast where farmers from the arid northlands have been settling recently with the assistance of the federal government.

The government continues to believe that the deficiencies under which the rural population labors can be corrected by
continuing and emphasizing measures to raise the level of rural life through the provision of land, education, and health measures, and by augmenting and raising the economic level. These in turn, it is believed, will instill a sense of human dignity and provide political tranquillity and stability, thus increasing the social and economic well-being of the campesinos and the country as a whole.\(^7\)

It was with these considerations in mind that the government turned to the idea of ejidal colonization of new lands. The government believes the ejidal system to be the best way of land distribution since it protects the farmer from himself (he cannot sell, rent, or mortgage the land) and has proven itself over the past 45 years. Therefore, one of the first steps taken was to change the Agrarian Code to provide that colonization of national lands could only be done under the ejidal system—private colonization was prohibited. This change was promulgated in the revised Article 58 of the Agrarian Code, December 31, 1962.

The Planning

Logically, areas for the establishment of the new centers of population had to be found in regions of the country removed from means of communication, and on land which had been scorned in times past by settlers. This brought the

\(^{7}\)During his campaign for the presidency, Diaz Ordaz, now President, indicated that he was strongly committed to this program.
State of Campeche to mind, since it had a population density of only 3.0 per square kilometer—168,219 people. It was therefore determined that if studies proved it feasible, Campeche would be the site of the initial colonization experiments.

Comprehensive studies were initiated by the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population in coordination with all other government agencies concerned to select appropriate locations. These agencies included initially the Departments of Agriculture and Livestock, Communications and Public Works, Water Resources, and Health and Assistance. Later planning required coordination with the Departments of Public Education, National Defense, and with the National Bank of Ejidal Credit.

After extensive studies of soil, foliage, grass, types of trees, rainfall, drainage, irrigation and flood control requirements, an area was selected along the banks of the Candelaria River and its tributaries between 17°30' and 18°15' North Latitude and between 90°45' and 91°15' West Longitude (see figure 2, page 10). This area was designated the Zone of the Rivers and comprises approximately 100,000 hectares (247,100 acres) of lowlands and semilowlands suitable for agriculture, livestock, and forestry. In addition, the Candelaria River is navigable for small craft all the way through the zone providing good transportation facilities to and from the railroad at the town of Candelaria.

The major part of the zone is lowland, but plans for
Figure 2.—Zone of the Rivers
drainage systems were worked out so that during the rainy season water would be drained from the farm lands and villages, and plans were drawn for flood control dams and dykes along the rivers. The dams and drainage ditches would also be used for irrigation during the dry season. Irrigation is considered indispensable even though the average annual rainfall is 53.2 inches (varying from 39 inches to 78 inches per year, 82 per cent of which falls during the rainy season from June to November) because the rainfall during the winter and spring is extremely variable.

There are lagoons in the area that are probably feeders for sweet water springs which maintain their level throughout the year. The waters of the Candelaria River and its tributaries are affluent and of good quality, usable for both domestic use and irrigation. However, in the lower reaches of the Candelaria River, the water becomes hard and impurities show up making it usable only for irrigation.

The zone produces good quality forage grasses during 6 to 8 months of the year, and with the use of irrigation it is believed that sufficient cereal grains and forage grasses can be grown to fulfill the needs of the State of Campeche in cereals, cattle, and milch cows. It is expected that the future will provide a surplus of both cereals and beef which can be shipped to the State of Yucatan, thus providing additional cash crops for the ejidos. The auxiliary use of irrigation will provide possibilities for cultivation throughout the year.
The studies indicated that some of the crops which could be expected to be cultivated in the zone are corn, beans, peanuts, rice, chili, cacao, tobacco, chicle, sesame, papaya, bananas, avocado, mango, citrus, and various nuts. In addition, precious woods such as mahogany, cedar, almond, bari, cachimbo, maculis, and tatuan are found in the area and can be harvested. Some of the area is suitable for reforestation of desired woods.

Since the studies of the region were considered favorable for colonization, it was determined that six new centers of population would be established initially in the Zone of the Rivers. Each ejido was to consist of 99 families and planned so as to allow room for future expansion.

Planning for these new ejidal centers consisted of choosing sites that provided adequate water for both domestic use and irrigation; elevation enough so that flooding would not be a problem in the rainy season; the best possibilities for improvement in agriculture, cattle raising, forestry, and transportation connections to centers of consumption for marketing; and the capacity to maintain the people in the best conditions of health and lodging.

Each ejido would have a total land area of approximately 6,000 hectares divided into individual, communal, and village parcels or areas. Each ejidatario (member of an ejido) would receive 20 hectares for individual farming, of which approximately 2½ hectares would be under permanent irrigation (this would vary in the different ejidos depending upon the number
of hectares considered necessary to place under irrigation). In addition, the farmer would have the use of at least 30 hectares of communal land for cattle grazing and forestry exploitation—the latter as a community project. The village areas would consist of 50 hectares divided into individual family lots and village centers with lots for the necessary commercial and social establishments. The original grant of land was considered adequate to allow for an initial expansion of each ejido to a total of 120 families.

Village planning provided for a lot of 2,500m² for each family which is considered sufficient for a house area of 54m² (7.5m x 7.2m), 20 fruit trees, vegetable garden, granary and barn, poultry pens, draft animals, and a pigsty. Two lots of the same size are provided for school teachers.

The village center consists of four central blocks (16 lots) for the school, playground and sports center, cooperative store and market place, health center, social center, and a plaza with garden and trees. The social center contains rooms for assemblies and lectures, and for exhibition of entertainment and educational films.

It was planned that the campesinos themselves, in a collective effort, would construct all of the buildings in the village under appropriate architectural and engineering supervision in accordance with approved designs. The campesinos would be screened for those having some skill or knowledge, or displaying an aptitude for carpentry, masonry, plastering, and other skills, to be used in the
construction requiring some skill, while the remainder would do the labor. Special training would be conducted for hand work, workshops, and fabricating of materials.

Materials for construction would be derived from the natural resources of the region insofar as practicable in order to lower costs. These include lime, stone, gravel, and sand for fabrication of wall partitions and concrete blocks for walls, wood for rafters, roofs, doors, windows, and furniture. Construction materials not available from local resources would be brought to the area. Sawmills would be set up in the most strategic locations to work all the wood necessary for the project, and campesinos would be trained in their operation.

All activities of the six new ejidal centers would be under the supervision and control of a resident engineer assigned to each ejido. The engineer would be responsible for the construction and the administrative and governmental activities connected with the ejido and its ejidatarios to which he was assigned. He would have responsibility for technical assistance, work assignments, construction planning and supervision, to include clearing of land and planting of first crops, maintenance of peace and order (the National Army would furnish roving patrols in the area since no state police would be available), and obtaining local construction materials.

In fact, every aspect for the establishment of the new center of population would be under his control as the highest
authority in the village and his decisions would be accepted as final. He would have authority to permit the campesinos to leave the area to visit the village of Candelaria for the purpose of making purchases of clothing and other items not available at the site of construction since it was believed that controls over the coming and going of campesinos would be necessary to insure orderly and rapid completion of construction, clearing, and planting.

The six resident engineers, in turn, would be under the control of a zone supervisor residing in Candelaria who would make regular and frequent supervisory trips to each new ejido site. The zone supervisor would be directly under the operational and administrative control of the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population. Neither the municipio (county) of Carmen nor the State of Campeche would have any administrative control over the new centers of population during the initial settling period. However, the State of Campeche would maintain legal and criminal jurisdiction over the ejidatarios, and their political rights would be administered through the municipio of Carmen. It was expected that the administrative control exercised by the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population would be removed approximately two years after the formation of the ejidos when, it was believed, the ejidos would be settled into cohesive communities and the ejidatarios would display sufficient maturity and responsibility to govern their communities under the governmental supervision
of the municipio of Carmen.

With preliminary studies and planning completed and locations determined, it remained to select the campesino families for the settlement project and get under way in actuality.

The selection of the campesinos has as its fundamental object their benefit. That is to say, in this move they are expected to leave behind their sentimental prejudices and make a success in transforming the totally new tropical zone into a new economic and social entity that will benefit the nation as well as themselves. Since this is the most important step in the formation of new centers of population, certain criteria were established to be observed in the selection of campesinos. First, the applicants must be:

1. Mexican, between 21 and 45 years of age.
2. Campesinos with derechos a salvo (literally: protected rights. It means their rights to land have been kept, they have not been prohibited by past actions from entitlement to land, they do not now have land.).
3. Head of a family and have responsibility for its maintenance.
4. In good health (certified by a doctor).
5. Of good moral character (certified by the authorities of his town or village of origin).

Second, the persons selected must demonstrate fully their
need for a parcel of land. Third, they must agree to the necessity of the head of family moving first to prepare living quarters, sanitary facilities, and first croplands for subsistence crops. Finally, those campesinos selected would have to understand and agree that consumption of alcoholic beverages in the newly formed ejidos would be prohibited, and that violators of this rule would forfeit their rights in the community.8

Here we return to our 492 campesinos as they boarded the train in Torreón. They had applied for and had been accepted as the first of the colonizers in the Zone of the Rivers, Campeche. They could look forward to a long period of hard work and austere living under a cooperative arrangement until their families joined them. They could, however, 

8 This was a quite drastic regulation. It has long been a tradition and accepted fact that the campesino gets drunk on Saturday and any other day that money becomes available without regard to the needs of his family. This apparently reflects more of a social phenomenon than a need for alcohol. It perhaps is an artificial need generated from a craving to belong that results in joining the crowd in social get-togethers where, if some drink, all drink in order not to feel left out of the gathering. The governmental propaganda concerning the necessity for continuous work and self-sacrifice to make the project successful apparently paid dividends since the selected campesinos agreed to the rule. Its really unexpected success is born out by the fact that at the time of the writer's visit, only six campesinos had violated the regulation and been expelled from the ejidos. There have been other quite successful attempts to break the Saturday drinking tradition in various areas of the country such as building sports centers and creating a genuine interest in various athletic activities. It is said that in some areas, where different interests have really been developed, some cantinas (saloons) have had to close because of lack of business.
feel secure in the knowledge that the government would be furnishing their families 8 pesos (1 peso equals 8 U. S. cents) a day for subsistence until they were reunited and that they themselves would receive 4 pesos a day for necessities in addition to their food. This was the first time in the history of Mexico that the government had provided all the necessities of life, tools, and equipment necessary for the cultivation of land, and the transportation and facilities for the movement of people.
CHAPTER II
THE NEW LAND

The Arrival

The village of Candelaria, Campeche, a small farming community of approximately 600 people on the east bank of the river of the same name, was the jumping-off place for the colonists (see figure 2, page 10 above). This village is on the railroad serving the states of the southeast and has a railway station for both passenger and freight service. Candelaria is also a river port where small freight and passenger launches provide service to the farmers and small communities scattered along the river as far south as the border of the Republic of Guatemala. This river is the only means of communication into the interior. Candelaria is a little less than 300 kilometers (186 miles, 1 kilometer equals approximately 0.62 miles) from the city of Campeche, capital of the State of Campeche. It is approximately 14 to 18 hours from that city by train.

Here, on March 19, 1963, after a long and monotonous train journey, the colonists arrived to face their great adventure. Here they received their first real impression of what the land and the climate were like. They saw at first

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9 The information contained in this chapter is based on personal interviews with the Zone Supervisory Engineer, his staff, the ejido resident engineers, several colonists, and on personal observation, all during the month of July, 1964.
hand the thick growth of the many kinds of trees, the tangled underbrush, the swamps, the insects, the water—all the result of heavy rainfall. These things they had been told about and had glimpsed from the train during its slow passage through the similar States of Tabasco and Chiapas. But now, the reality of what they saw and the knowledge that here, in this countryside that was so different from the dry, arid region they had left, was the place where they had committed themselves to exploit a living, to construct new homes and schools, and to develop for themselves a completely new life so different from the old, left them with a disconcerted feeling of both hope and doubt. They wondered how they would stand this climate, so different with its humid heat and tropical rainfall, and how their families would adjust to it when they finally arrived.

They talked to the local inhabitants about the conditions they could expect, the hardships to be encountered, the weather, the jungle, the farming. And, although the campesinos had all been thoroughly informed before leaving their old homes of what to expect, a few became immediately discouraged or frightened of the realities and left the following day—at their own expense—to return to their places of origin. (Some of those who remained told the writer that far from being discouraged on their arrival, they were very happy to see the water in the river and the lush growth of the vegetation because they knew that ample water was the key to agricultural success.)
The remaining campesinos, during their stay of a day or two in Candelaria, were arbitrarily formed into groups from a master list of names by the officials of the colonization project. Each group was assigned to one of the new centers of ejidal population which had been named: Venustiano Carranza, Monclova, Estado de Mexico, Pedro Barando, Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo, and Nueva Coahuila. At this time, each colonist was given a pair of gloves, a sombrero, a work shirt, a pair of trousers, a pair of boots, a mosquito net, a hammock, a machete, an axe, and a file.

The Work Begins

After this preliminary organization and issuance of clothing and equipment, the groups boarded launches and were conveyed up-river to their respective ejido sites. There the resident engineer in each site took charge and put them immediately to work clearing land and building two large champones (shelters); one to be used as a collective kitchen, dining hall, cooperative store, and dormitory to serve while the land was being cleared and the houses built; the other to be used for a shop area for manufacturing concrete blocks and doing woodwork. The champones were constructed of trunks and leaves from palm trees, and were perfectly adequate to serve their purpose. At the same time, a small, wooden dock was built on the river bank for loading and unloading freight and people.

In two of the new ejido sites, Venustiano Carranza
and Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo, the colonists found they had been preceded by natives of the region who had applied for and been accepted for the project. All of the people along the Candelaria River had been invited to join the colonization experiment and a few had applied and been accepted. Some of them had already been in these two colonies for some time and consequently much of the urban land had already been cleared, thus making the job considerably easier for those fortunate enough to be assigned to Venustiano Carranza and Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo.

After the groups of campesinos had all been transported to the ejido sites, additional tools and equipment were furnished. Each ejido received kitchen equipment and utensils, a small mill for grinding corn, individual eating utensils, picks, shovels, drilling rods, levels, plumb bobs, string, trowels, saws, wheelbarrows, forms and vibrators for making concrete blocks, small gasoline engines, small diesel generators, and other equipment. In addition, each ejido received a 2½ ton truck except Venustiano Carranza which received two ¾ ton pickups. Four of the colonies each received a farm tractor which they used to help clear land, dragging logs and brush. Much later, four Caterpillar D8 tractors were brought in to clear land, dig drainage canals and ditches, make roads and streets, and so on.

As noted on page 13 above, the work of clearing the land and constructing the buildings was to be a collective effort. Therefore, the campesinos were formed into work
groups, called work brigades, each with a different work assignment. (Hereafter, the words brigade and group will be used synonymously in connection with work groups.) One group was to clear land, one was to mark trees to be used in construction, one was to do the cooking, one was to dig foundations, one was to make concrete blocks, one was to do carpenter work, and so on.

The resident engineer in each ejido had sole responsibility for forming the campesinos into work brigades. He did this as well as he was able according to the aptitudes and skills displayed by the individual workers. Changes from one group to another were made by him as necessary to resolve personality conflicts or to find a more suitable job as indicated by a worker's aptitude. Brigade leaders were appointed by the resident engineers for those groups having work assignments for which qualified men were available to be assigned as leaders. In other brigades, leaders were not appointed but soon the natural leader, one who had displayed aptitude and leadership, gradually assumed responsibility through mutual acknowledgment of his ability. Even so, every member of the ejido had direct access to the resident engineer for questions, controversies, doubts, and discussion. All instructions and orders were usually given to the work groups as a whole rather than to appointed or group-acknowledged leaders.

The resident engineers followed the plans they had been furnished as closely as possible. The plans specified the
layout of the urban areas and the size and manner of construction of all buildings. All houses were to be the same, as were the medical centers, schools, social centers, and plazas. All streets were to be the same width. Individual housing lots were to be the same size, i.e. ½ hectare (2,500m²). First priority was assigned to building houses and medical centers. Next would come the schools, social centers, plazas, and streets.

When the champones had been completed, work was started on clearing the urban area and constructing houses. The various work brigades were assigned and, where necessary, the campesinos were trained in specific jobs such as carpentry, concrete block making, iron work, masonry, and so on. Although such training took time and added to the expense of the project, it is still believed that the work was done cheaper than if contractors had been called in for the construction work. In addition, there is a great feeling of pride of accomplishment among the campesinos in having built their own homes. And after all, the development of pride among the campesinos is one of the objectives of the project.

The work proceeded slowly. Most of the clearing for the first few months had to be done solely by hand since the big bulldozers were not yet available. Very few of the campesinos were familiar with handling machetes and it took time to develop skill in their use. This was also true for many of the other tools and equipment they had to work with.

Land clearing was a very difficult chore. The natural
clearings in the ejido areas were very small and trees and tangled brush covered most of the urban sites, stretching all the way down to the river. Many campesinos suffered from bleeding hands and blisters from wielding the unfamiliar tools. But even so, many of them welcomed the hard work and long hours. Some of them told the writer that the exhausting work helped them to better bear the separation from their families, since by the time the day's work was done they were so physically tired that their only thoughts were of food, rest, and sleep.

On the other hand, many others left the project and returned to their old home areas at their own expense. They left for various reasons. Some of them were discouraged and disheartened by the hard work and held doubts about the future of the colonization experiment. Others could no longer bear the separation from their families. A few were alcoholics and could not bide the rule on prohibition of liquor in the ejidos—these were considered potential troublemakers and there was no sadness at their departure. Approximately 20 per cent of the campesinos who joined this colonization experiment have left for one reason or another over the entire period of the project so far. The officials consider they were the weaker ones and that the ejidos are probably better off for their departure. However, the places of those who left were quickly filled with volunteers from many different states of Mexico, until now almost every state and the Federal District are represented in the colonies.
By the time the bulldozers were brought in, the campesinos had cleared approximately half of the urban areas by hand labor, saving the usable woods and burning the remainder. (The bulldozers had to wait for dry weather because they had to be driven in through the jungle, sometimes using forest trails and logging roads, and sometimes pushing their way through the brush and trees, because of the lack of loading and unloading facilities along the river.)

Wherever possible, the natural resources available in the countryside were utilized for construction. Sandstone was broken and ground to be used for sand for making concrete; the wood from cedar and mahogany trees was used for doors, windows, shutters, beams, rafters, roofing, tables, chairs, and so on. Some of the items which had to be brought in were cement, iron rod reinforcements, screening for windows and doors, nails, asphalt for roofing, gasoline and oil, and food supplies.

At first, each ejido manufactured its own concrete blocks, windows, shutters, and doors, but it was later decided that it would be more efficient to manufacture these articles in a central place and distribute them to the various ejidos. Therefore, since Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla had a large sandstone deposit in the urban area, it was decided that concrete blocks would be manufactured there. Also, since this same ejido was further along with construction than the others, and had good carpenters with an excellent supervisor, it was decided that a larger sawmill would be set up there and
all windows, shutters, and doors would be manufactured there. This was done and the construction work in the other villages was speeded up as a consequence.

As the work progressed and the urban areas were cleared of trees, brush and rocks, the clearing brigades moved outside the urban areas to clear land for crops. When planting time came around in the spring of 1964, several hundred hectares of land had been cleared and readied for planting in each ejido. At this time, additional agronomists (five) were assigned to the ejidos by the government to assist in planting and all other agricultural aspects of the project, including the starting of perennial plants and trees. These five agronomists were under the supervision of an agricultural engineer assigned from the Department of Ejidal Agricultural Development, who determined what crops, plants, and trees would be grown.

**The Families Come**

By January 1964, enough houses had been constructed to provide housing for most of the colonists. It was now time for the wives and families who had remained in the Torreón area to join their husbands and fathers. While the government was making arrangements to transport the families on special trains containing medical personnel and army kitchen cars and cooks to feed the families while being transported, the colonists drew lots to decide who got what house and lot and parcel of land. Drawing of lots was deemed to be the
most equitable system of distribution to use to eliminate chances or charges of discrimination.

Early in the morning of January 16, 1964, 1,191 persons, families of colonists, assembled in Torreón from all the outlying areas where they had been waiting to prepare for departure. The Torreón city officials provided them with a breakfast and a general air of festivity prevailed. On the same day, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the special train, dubbed the "Caravan of Hope", pulled away from the station and the families of the colonists were, at long last, on their way to join their loved ones in the tropical land of Campeche. They were leaving the arid region in which they had been born and raised and had lived for their lifetimes up until now. They were leaving friends and relatives for a life and a place that they knew only from description through letters from their husbands and fathers. There was excitement and joy and sadness, all intermingled. There was anticipation, that of seeing their loved ones soon, and that of seeing their new homes and the new land. There was the excitement of the first train trip for most of them, with the resulting adventures for the children.

The government had planned and provided well for the transportation of the families. Trained medical personnel accompanied them throughout the journey. The Army provided kitchen cars and soldiers to cook for them. The Army cooks even prepared and heated bottles for babies at a rate of 600 a day. Other soldiers were along to provide other necessary
services such as security and maintenance of order.

This long journey of 2,800 kilometers (1,736 miles) was passed without serious incident or sickness and the families were soon reunited in the new homes on the bank of the beautiful Candelaria River. Other families soon followed, and it was not long until all the campesinos had their families with them.

With the joyful reunions past, the women of the households soon got to work making their new homes as livable as possible with the few belongings they had that they were able to bring with them. Next came garden planting and the other chores necessary for home building.

The children found this a paradise with the river to swim and fish in, and the woods to explore. Those who could not swim (the majority) soon overcame this lack and swam and played in the river at every opportunity.

With the coming of the families, the cooperative store in each village, supplied by a government sponsored agency, expanded its limited selection of necessary food, clothing, and shoes, but they are limited to providing the bare necessities of life. Even if they were more adequately stocked, the ejidatarios could not buy because they are limited to a credit of ten pesos a day--the new rate the government provides when the families are reunited. The campesinos say that this rate provides only a bare food subsistence for a small family and that garden supplements are required to provide enough food. Purchase of clothing and shoes is practically
impossible for most, and the articles of clothing they had brought with them must last until the first crops are harvested and sold. Larger families have a more difficult time and depend heavily on fruits and nuts from the surrounding jungle to supplement the beans, rice, and maize they can get in the cooperative store and the vegetables raised in their gardens.

When the families of the campesinos arrived in their new villages, they found that only the houses and the medical centers were finished. The schools, social centers, and plazas still remained to be constructed.

Each medical center is staffed with an especially trained nurse with limited supplies of basic drugs, serums, and medications. It has a gas-operated refrigerator for serum and drug storage, a well equipped examining room, and a two-bed patients’ room. A doctor from the Candelaria hospital, accompanied by an intern and trained nurse, visits each village once a week. Emergency cases and pregnant women are taken to Candelaria for treatment when possible. The doctor will come up-river on emergency calls when required. These medical centers are equipped and staffed by the Department of Health and Assistance. In addition, the medical centers each have two sewing machines for the use of the women of the community. Presumably they will be moved to the social centers when they are completed.

Although the schools are not finished, classes are held outdoors in good weather and in a champón during inclement weather. Children are given breakfast at school consisting
of milk, bread, and chocolate as a minimum. The children like this, and it is a help to the parents as well as being a sort of bribe to the children to attend school. This is a nationwide program in all elementary public schools. Two school teachers are assigned to each village by the Department of Public Education, and all necessary supplies, books, and equipment are also furnished by this department which will equip and maintain the schools when they are completed.

But the women and children were happy with what they found. Their greatest happiness, of course, was in having the whole family together again. However, the houses were a great source of happiness and pride. Their men folk had built for them fine, solid, concrete block houses with two bedrooms, a combination living-dining room, a bathroom, and a kitchen. It is true that there is not yet running water, electricity, or gas in the houses, but in time these things may come, and the campesinos do not miss what they have never had. For most of these people, these houses are palaces. Most of them had previously lived in small one-or two-room board shacks with dirt floors, sometimes shared with other families. Here, although the larger families are crowded, they are immensely better off insofar as living quarters are concerned—not to mention having land to till and pasture on which to raise livestock, a possibility which a few short months ago must have been unbelievable to them.

Six months after the women and children arrived in the Zone of the Rivers, corn in the fields was ten feet tall and
in excellent condition; chili, tomatoes, squash, melons, and other vegetables were growing well in the gardens; fruit trees had been planted and were growing rapidly; work on the school houses was progressing; more land had been cleared; and a more or less general feeling of optimism for the future was in the air even though much remained to be done before the colonists could finally say, "Now we have a town and farms and cattle and economic freedom from want."
Figure 3.--
Candelaria, jumping-off point to the colonies

Figure 4.--
Typical native dwelling on the Candelaria River

Figure 5.--
River landing, Nueva Coahuila, 4 kms from Guatamala
Figure 6.--Champón under construction

Figure 7.--Campesinos and houses under construction
Figure 8.—A completed Champón

Figure 9.—A finished house

Figure 10.—Agronomist, corn field, houses
Figure 11.--
A colonist family at the entrance to their home

Figure 12.--
Boys swimming from boat landing

Figure 13.--
Plaza area, school house under construction
Figure 14.---Going to work. Note squash vines in corn field.

Figure 15.---Children attending makeshift school.
Figure 16.—
Boat landing
and entrance
to Venustiano
Carranza

Figure 17.—
A view of
Venustiano
Carranza

Figure 18.—
Special plot
for starting
fruit trees
and plants
CHAPTER III
THE EJIDO SYSTEM

This chapter presents a brief look at the modern ejido system in Mexico, its organization, and the governmental responsibilities thereto as prescribed by law. It also discusses briefly the means devised by the federal government to provide the credits necessary for ejidatarios to develop an improved economy in the furtherance of their quest for a better and more equitable livelihood with improved social, moral, economic, and political conditions.

Development and Definition

At the beginning of the Revolution of 1910, the agrarian structure of Mexico was dominated by the hacienda institution. Haciendas (large landed estates) contained nearly one half of the total rural population and 82 per cent of the total rural communities. The hacienda completely governed the lives and welfare of its peons through a system of credit and nominal wages which reduced the peasants to virtual debt-slavery under semi-feudal conditions.

It was the hacienda system and the economic and political milieu it created with which the Mexican Revolution struggled. The Revolution brought with it the cry for "land and liberty" ("tierra y libertad"); and, in 1915 the Revolutionary Government

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10 Tannenbaum, p. 141.
11 Ibid., p. 143.
12 Ibid., p. 146.
decreed that lands taken from villages by force or fraud would be returned upon the presentation of adequate proof of entitlement. This decree was later incorporated into Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917. Although the law of 1915 and Article 27 were the birth of the modern ejido system, the governments of the Revolution, up to the time of President Cárdenas (1934-40), interpreted the law narrowly and resisted pressures to make the law mean what it is now interpreted to mean, the implicit destruction of large and medium landholding and the substitution of communal village ownership as the dominating system of land tenure.13

It must now be clear what the purpose of Article 27 was: to recover the land granted to large companies by concessions, to make it difficult for foreigners to acquire agricultural rural properties, to break up the hacienda system, to encourage the development of communities, to free the population from peonage, and to return to the villages the lands taken from them. But Article 27 contains a great deal more than what was dictated by a desire to break the hold of the hacienda upon the nation. These other elements are partly responsive to the demand to fortify the State against its traditional enemies in Mexico: the hacienda, foreign influence, and the Church as a political power.14

The law has been changed and expanded until now the communal village (ejido) is dominant in the land tenure structure of Mexico. The ejido system borrowed from the pre-Conquest Indian communal village (which persisted all through the colonial period strengthened somewhat by Spanish colonial laws) such traditions as assignment of tillable lands to individuals, further assignable through inheritance to an

13 Ibid., p. 147.
14 Ibid., p. 146.
The agrarian laws have been changed to some degree since the publication of Rural Mexico, and provision has been made for ejido colonization of national lands as discussed on page 9 above, but Whetten's definition of "ejido" still remains sound.

The term ejido ... refers to an agrarian community which has received and continues to hold land in accordance with the agrarian laws growing out of the Revolution of 1910. The lands may have been received as an outright grant from the government or as a restitution of lands that were previously possessed by the community and adjudged by the government to have been illegally appropriated by other individuals or groups; or the community may merely have received confirmation by the government of titles to land long in its possession. Ordinarily, the ejido consists of at least twenty individuals, usually heads of families (though not always), who were eligible to receive land in accordance with the rules of the Agrarian Code, together with the members of their immediate families.

... The total population of an ejido might vary from less than one hundred inhabitants to several thousand. In the smaller villages where ejidos have been established or in newly settled villages resulting directly from the formation of an ejido, the ejido and village with its surrounding lands are almost coextensive, though not entirely so. There are almost always a few families in the village, however small, who are ineligible to benefit from the agrarian laws. These may be small shopkeepers or other persons whose traditional occupation is not

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15 Ibid., pp. 151-52. The writer suggests that interested readers see Helen Phipps, Some Aspects of the Agrarian Question in Mexico--A Historical Study (Austin: University of Texas, 1925), for a discussion of land tenure in Mexico prior to the Conquest and during the colonial period, and Whetten for a comprehensive discussion of the development of the ejido system.
farming. Their interests might be closely bound up with the ejido, but they would not be considered members of it. Other residents of the village who do not belong to the ejido are those families who were already in possession of small private holdings of their own and for this reason did not qualify to receive land under the agrarian laws. In the larger villages and towns there might be two or more ejidos in the same village; or the ejido population might constitute only a fraction of the total population of the town.16

Ejidos may be "collectivized", owned and worked cooperatively; "parcelized", owned cooperatively but worked individually; or, contain both individual plots worked individually and communal lands worked cooperatively, such as those discussed in this thesis. In any case, they have certain characteristics in common. The ejido and its members have a "use title" to the land. They cannot sell, lease, rent, mortgage, or alienate the land in any way. Failure to cultivate the land for two successive years is a cause for loss of title. The individual plot or membership reverts to the group if a family moves away or dies out.17

**Ejido Organization**18

Ejido organization is legally prescribed by the Agrarian Code and, each ejido is a legal entity. Ultimate local authority is vested in the general assembly, with administrative functions delegated to two local committees: (1) the comisariado

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16Whetten, pp. 182-83.
18"*Codigo Agrario de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*, *Codigo Agrario y Leyes Complementarias* (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1964). The information contained in this section has been extracted from the Agrarian Code promulgated in 1943 and amendments thereto. Appropriate articles of the code are indicated in the text.
ejidal (a sort of executive committee, which, for the convenience of the reader, will be called executive committee for the remainder of this section), consisting of three elected members with three alternates; and (2) the vigilance committee, with the same number of members and alternates.

The General Assembly. The assembly consists of all the ejidatarios in a given ejido. Meetings are usually held once each month at the call of the executive committee upon appropriate advance notice. One-half the total number of ejidatarios plus one constitute a quorum at these meetings. If, as a result of the first call a quorum is not present, a second call is made indicating that the second meeting will be deemed legal and its actions binding upon all, regardless of the number attending. The general assembly, by majority vote, elects the members of the executive committee (Art. 22). The members of the vigilance committee are then elected by the minority (Art. 29), unless the members of the executive committee were elected by unanimous vote in which case the members of the vigilance committee must be elected by unanimous vote also. Members of either committee may be re-elected by a two-thirds majority vote (Art. 20). Article 42 of the Agrarian Code specifies the principal functions of the general assembly as follows:

I. To elect and remove the members of the Executive Committee and the members of the Vigilance Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Code.

II. To authorize, modify or rectify the decisions of the Executive Committee whenever this is in order according to law.

III. To discuss and approve, in the respective case,
the reports rendered by the Executive Committee and to order that the statements of account which they approve be posted in a visible place in the center of population.

IV. To request the intervention of the agrarian authorities on matters relating to the suspension or privation of rights of members of the ejido.

V. To issue rulings connected with the form in which the lands held in common by the ejido should be used, which rulings must be approved and regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture or by the National Bank of Ejidal Credit.

VI. To perform such other duties as are assigned to it by this Code and other laws and regulations.

The Executive Committee. The committee is charged with operative management of the ejido's affairs. The three members serve as president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively (Art. 22), and are elected for a term of three years (Art. 31). A candidate to membership on this committee must be an ejidatario in full enjoyment of his rights and privileges, must have lived in the ejido for at least six months immediately prior to the election, must be able to read and write, must have a record of good conduct, and must be a member of the local ejidal credit society¹⁹ when there is one in the ejido to which the majority of the members of the ejido belong (Art. 23). Article 43 prescribes the functions of the committee. In general they are as follows: (1) to represent the ejido with power of attorney before administrative and judicial authorities; (2) to receive and execute the laws of the government, or presidential resolutions; (3) to administer such ejido property as is used collectively; (4) to call a meeting of the general assembly at least once a month or whenever the

¹⁹Ejidal credit societies are discussed below, p. 50.
vigilance committee, the Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, or the National Bank of Ejidal Credit may request; (5) to acquaint the general assembly with work carried out, to account for the expenditure of funds, and to make such proposals as may be deemed advisable; and (6) to comply with and enforce the rulings of the agrarian authorities and the general assembly.

A member of the executive committee may be removed from office, prior to the expiration of his term, for the following reasons (Art. 24): (1) failure to comply with the decisions of the general assembly; (2) violation of the provisions of the Agrarian Code; (3) disobeying the rulings of the Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, or the National Bank of Ejidal Credit within their respective jurisdictions; (4) misappropriation of funds; (5) having been prosecuted for any offense punishable by imprisonment; or (6) for being absent from the ejido for more than three consecutive months without justified reason.

The Vigilance Committee. This committee is responsible for insuring that the activities of the executive committee are in accordance with the regulations of the Agrarian Code and that the mandates of the general assembly are carried out. Its three members are designated president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively (Art. 29). They are elected for a term of three years (Art. 31), but they may be removed from office by two-thirds majority vote of the general assembly for
failure to perform duties assigned to them or for any offense merits imprisonment (Art. 30). Their duties, specified in Article 45 of the Agrarian Code, are as follows:

I. To exercise care to insure that all acts of the Executive Committee are in accordance with the provisions of the Code and with the rulings issued governing the organization, administration and utilization of the ejido, and to see that all other rulings of the law governing the activities of the Executive Committee are duly complied with.

II. To inspect monthly the accounts of the Executive Committee, and to formulate its observations to be submitted to the General Assembly.

III. To report to the Agrarian Department all matters which involve a change or modification of agrarian rights, and to the Ministry of Agriculture all anomalies or obstacles to the proper use of the property of the ejido, whenever the Executive Committee fails to report such matters.

IV. To request the Executive Committee to call a meeting of the General Assembly whenever the Vigilance Committee so deems advisable or whenever at least 25 per cent of the persons constituting the ejido so request.

V. To perform such other duties as are assigned to it by this Code, and other Laws and Regulations.

Functions of the Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization. On January 1, 1959, portions of the Agrarian Code were changed by presidential decree to transfer various functions and responsibilities from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to the Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization, whose title prior to this date was Agrarian Department. The Chief of the Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization has the political, technical, and administrative responsibility of the dependencies under his charge before

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20 Now called Department of Agrarian Affairs and Colonization. Except for direct quotation from the Agrarian Code, the name "Agrarian Department" has been changed accordingly in this text.
the President of the Republic. Some of the duties with which he is charged are: (1) to sign, together with the President of the Republic, resolutions and accords concerning agrarian matters, and to execute those which are his proper responsibility; (2) to resolve conflicts that are raised in the ejidos concerning the determination of boundaries or of the appointment of zones of protection, or from other causes, when their resolution is not especially attributed to other authorities; (3) to represent the President of the Republic in all acts connected with the creation, recognition, modification and granting of any right based on the Agrarian Code, except in the cases specifically reserved by law to some other authority (Art. 35); (4) to determine adequate legal controls to develop and provide for the best utilization of the products and resources of the ejidos, communities, and new centers of ejidal population in order to encourage better agricultural practices that will tend to improve the social and economic life of the ejidos; (5) to resolve questions of organization of ejidos in accordance with the Agrarian Code and other pertinent laws and regulations; (6) to supervise the elections of ejidal authorities; (7) to approve contracts concerning products, resources, or utilities of the ejidos, entered into among themselves or between ejidos and third parties, to insure their legality; (8) to render an opinion on cases involving the withdrawal of agrarian rights, the deletion of names from the ejidal census, the merger, and division of ejidos, the expropriation of ejido property, and the admission
of new ejidatarios to ejidos; (9) to coordinate the activities of the various dependencies of the Department to the end of improving the agriculture and livestock of the ejidos; (10) to perform such other duties as are assigned to it by the Agrarian Code, and other laws and regulations (Art. 38).

In our ejidos, although they are organized with the appropriate committees, the functions prescribed by the Agrarian Code are not now performed to any important extent. This is because the ejidos are still under the technical direction of the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population. When this technical direction or control is removed, which will take place at the end of 1964 or during the first part of 1965 according to current plans, the executive and vigilance committees of the ejido association will take over their proper administrative and operational responsibilities.22

**Ejido Credit**23

The National Bank of Ejidal Credit. The bank was established in 1936, by Congress, for the purpose of supplying credit to the ejidatarios. The original law has been changed several times and was completely and comprehensively rewritten, abrogating the former laws, on December 30, 1955 (Transitorio,

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22De la Rosa.
23"Ley de Credito Agricola", Codigo Agrario. The information contained in this section has been extracted and paraphrased from this law. Appropriate articles of the law are indicated in the text.
Art. 1). However, the bank formulates its own banking rules within the framework of the law. It operates through regional banks in the various states which, in turn, have branch banks in strategic locations. The National Bank and the regional banks, although originally started with Federal capital, are autonomous (Arts. 4, 26), and capitalized through issuance of stock on which dividends are paid (Art. 24). There are two stock series: series "A" sold only to the Federal Government; and series "B" open to public subscription (Art. 7).

The law governing the objectives and operational requirements and prohibitions of the National Bank of Ejidal Credit and its regional banks is much too detailed to cover here. However, the three major types of loans made to ejidatarios are considered to be of interest and importance to this paper and are as follows:

1. **Avio** loans are short-term seasonal loans running up to a period of eighteen months. They provide funds for planting expenses and caring for crops until the harvest is over. They may be granted up to a maximum of 70 per cent of the probable crop or of the annual product of the debtor (Art. 55).

2. **Refraccionario** loans may run from one to twelve years depending on the purpose for which used. They are granted for the preparation of new land for cultivation, the purchase of farm machinery, work animals, fertilizers, cattle, the cultivation of cyclical or perennial crops, or the purchase of other goods or equipment which will last more than one season (Art. 56).
3. *Inmobiliaro* loans are made for long-range purposes such as major permanent construction, construction and acquisition of material and equipment of means of communication, acquisition, division, or colonization of lands, and so on. These loans will not exceed a period of twenty years (Art. 57). They may not exceed 30 per cent of the value of the income which the debtor expects to receive during the amortization period (Art. 60).

**Ejidal Credit Societies.** It is practicably impossible for ejidatarios to obtain private loans since they cannot mortgage their property and the only security they can offer is their crops. The banks of ejidal credit do not extend any credit to private individuals (Art. 117), and the ejidal credit societies, organized as legal entities (Art. 3), are expressly for the purpose of obtaining credit from these banks. Their organization requires bank approval.

The credit societies have as their ultimate purpose, the fomenting of the economic betterment of their members and their intellectual, moral, and social progress. It is anticipated that the various loans which the banks of ejidal credit are authorized to extend to them will assist them in reaching these goals (Art. 38). These loans and the purposes for which they may be granted are briefly explained above on page 49.

A minimum of ten members is required to constitute an ejidal credit society (Art. 45). All members of an ejido are not required to belong, but only the members of the society can use its facilities and enjoy its benefits. The supreme
authority of a credit society is its general assembly which designates, for a period of three years, a commission of administration consisting of either three or five members. The commission is responsible for directing and administering the affairs of the society and has the authority to do so. The general assembly also elects a vigilance committee composed of three members whose duties are, in general, to insure that the commission of administration performs prudently, competently, and honestly, and in accordance with the laws and with the constitution of the society. The general assembly, in addition, from among the members of the commission of administration, selects one who is designated socio delgado and is empowered to negotiate agreements with the bank for the members. A representative of the appropriate bank supervises the original organization meeting and can express the bank's views, but he has no vote in the assembly. The general assembly convenes whenever necessary to approve plans of work and credit during the agricultural cycle, and in order to become familiar with the latest operational practices of the society. The bank, if it so desires, may have a representative to check the bookkeeping, accounts, and operations of the society (Art. 47).

The constitution of the society must contain (Art. 52): (1) the names and addresses of the constitutors; (2) the name and address of the society; (3) its object; (4) the type of governmental responsibility adopted; (5) the method adopted to constitute or increase the social capital, and to place a valuation on property and rights in case they are contributed;
(6) the manner in which the administration will conform, and
the powers granted to the administrators; (7) the requisites
for convening and functioning of the assembly; (8) the requi-
sites for admission, exclusion, and separation of members;
(9) the manner of distribution of profits and losses among
the members; (10) the rules for dissolution and liquidation;
(11) the rules for the final distribution of the social
capital and the capital reserves; (12) the other norms that
must be observed in its functioning and developing.

It is pertinent here to point out that the socio delgado
arranges all credit with the bank for each individual member,
as well as that for communal use, but the ejidal credit soci-
ety is responsible for all the credit granted even though the
actual credits are given to the individual members. This
system creates a sort of social pressure on each individual
to do as good a job of farming as he can, because, if one does
not produce sufficient crops to pay for the credits advanced
by the bank, the credit society must pick up the slack.

The law contains much more pertaining to the ejidal credit
societies but it is not considered necessary to include further
detail here. Neither is it considered necessary to include
the detailed operational aspects of the societies. It is be-
lieved that sufficient material has been presented to provide
a reasonable understanding of the general credit picture con-
fronting the ejidatarios.

At the time of the writer's visit to the ejidos, credit
arrangements with the Regional Bank of Ejidal Credit had not
been completed. Such arrangements are necessarily complex--perhaps too much so--and bureaucratic "red tape" seems to play a major part in their ultimate completion. However, procedures were being worked out, and it was believed that credit agreements would be concluded by the middle of September 1964.
CHAPTER IV
MISCELLANY

As is indicated by the title, this chapter is a conglom-erate of miscellaneous information, derived from various inter-
tviews, conversations, and personal observation. Each item
is of some importance in itself, but none of them are of such
length or importance as to justify separate treatment. 24

Things to be Done

Of all that remained to be done at the time of the writer's
visit, perhaps the most important and pressing thing was the
establishment of credit for the colonists with the Regional
Bank of Ejidal Credit. This was discussed above on page 52,
and, therefore, this section will consider other matters of
importance to the colonization project which are yet to be
accomplished.

Money to construct a road connecting these six ejido
villages with the town of Candelaria was budgeted and approved
in May 1964. The Department of Communications and Public
Works will begin construction on this project after the ad-
vent of the dry season in November 1964.

Irrigation and flood control projects remain to be done.

24 The information contained in this chapter is based on
personal interviews with members of the staff of the Secre-
tary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population, the Zone
Supervisory Engineer and his staff, the resident engineers
and agronomists, colonists, and on personal observation, all
during the month of July 1964.
The Department of Water Resources has begun work on this at Venustiano Carranza. However, these projects will take very much money and a lot of time to complete.

The construction of the social centers and plazas in the ejido population centers will be done at a more leisurely pace, in between work in the fields and on the streets of the villages.

Although the ejidatarios will grow corn, rice, peanuts, and other crops, the government agronomists believe that the future of this part of the country will be better served by placing emphasis on crops provided by perennial plants and trees such as tropical fruits, vanilla, rubber, chicle, cacao, and so on, and the exploitation of precious woods from the forests. With this in mind, they have already cleared lanes in the jungle for vanilla cultivation and are starting fruit, rubber, and other trees and plants. This emphasis on perennial plants and trees is due in large part to the fact that the tropical soil erodes easily and wears out quickly without proper crop rotation, rest, and care. There is a fear that the campesinos will not properly care for the soil if they are left unsupervised. In addition to the perennial plants and trees, it is planned that cattle will play a large part in the economy of the ejidos. As a matter of fact, it is considered that the perennial plant and tree produce and cattle will provide the major source of cash income for the farmers, but other crop sources will not be neglected.
Cost and Repayment

The government estimates that the cost of establishing these new centers of ejidal population is approximately $20,000 (pesos) per family. The government is not making an outright gift or donation of all this to the campesinos. On the contrary, they are expected to repay to the government, over a ten-year period from the time of their first cash harvest, the cost to the government for materials to build the houses and all of the per diem payments. This will amount to approximately $10,000 (pesos) for each family. The amount of the annual payments will be based on a percentage of the cash crops marketed—the larger the crop the larger the payment. The remainder of the government's expenditure will be charged against social overhead costs.

Those campesinos who left the ejido projects will not be required to repay any of the money expended on them, since the majority of them did contribute work to the projects. The amount expended on those who left immediately after arrival was so negligible that any attempt to collect from them is considered uneconomical and impractical.

Census Information²⁵

It was noted on page 16 above that applicants were to be

²⁵Figures obtained from census data compiled by the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population in February 1964.
limited to campesinos between the ages of 21 years and 45 years. This criterion was not adhered to, and applicants meeting the other provisions established in the criteria for applicants were admitted regardless of age, providing they had reached the majority age of 18 years. This resulted in colonists ranging in age from 18 years to one of 81 years who had joined the project from the Zone of the Rivers. However, there are only 40 heads of families who are over 45 years of age. The average age for the family heads is 33 years.

The number of children in the families varies from no children in 35 families to 14 in one family. The average number of children per family is five. Children range in age from infants to 18 years.

There are 99 campesino families in each ejido. In some of the families there are more than two adults. Widowed mothers or adult children make up the majority of these cases. The writer happened on to one case where a father and three of his sons had all been granted ejidal rights in the colonies. Presumably there could be more of these cases.

During a conversation with one of the colonists, the informant revealed that he was taking a correspondence course in police investigative procedures. The writer was intrigued by this and made inquiry of one of the officials as to whether or not many of the ejidatarios took correspondence courses. The reply was that several colonists did, in a quite wide range of interests. Courses were being taken in English, automobile mechanics, police work, agriculture, and radio,
to name a few that the official was familiar with off-hand. These courses are provided free by the Department of Public Education. In addition, many agricultural publications are distributed free to the colonists. No exact literacy rate among the campesinos had been determined, but it was estimated that more than 50 per cent could read and write to a limited extent and, of course, a few were fairly proficient.

It was also interesting to note that a few of the campesinos, through the simple device of having someone else take their medical examinations, slipped into the project with undetected disqualifying diseases such as tuberculosis and anemia. No action was taken unless the diseases were quite serious.

Church and Religious Services

There are no plans as yet to construct churches in these communities. The ejidatarios say that they think it will be quite some time in the future before churches are built. However, Catholic priests visit the colonies from time to time to hold mass, perform weddings, and carry out other religious activities. The last mass held in the colonies prior to the writer's visit in July 1964, was in the month of April 1964, although priests have visited since that time and performed other religious activities.

There is a church in the village of Candelaria which the colonists may attend. The problem, of course, is transportation to and from Candelaria. The river boats charge for transporting
passengers and the majority of the colonists have no cash nor the means to earn any. However, there are a few who manage to go to Candelaria at rare intervals and who do take advantage of the church facilities when they do go.

The men and women, particularly the women, say they do miss going to church and will be happier when it becomes easier for them to do so. In the meantime, they say they can get along without regular services as long as they receive periodic visits from the priests.

At the time of the writer's visit, members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church were attempting to get permission to do missionary work in the colonies. The writer does not know the outcome of this attempt, but assumes permission was or will be granted—if not now, later.

Administration

As has been noted in chapter 11, each ejido resident engineer is responsible for all the work activities in his ejido. He is also responsible for requisitioning supplies and material from the zone supervisor in Candelaria, who is responsible for consolidating the requisitions and forwarding them to the appropriate agencies for filling. The resident engineer, until the families arrived, also controlled the granting of passes to the campesinos to visit Candelaria. These were held to a minimum and granted only for very good reasons. This was done so as to keep as many men on the job at all times as possible. The campesinos worked from sunup to sunset,
six days a week. They used Sundays for washing and mending clothing, and resting. Some swam in the river, a few fished, a few hunted, but most just relaxed and rested up for the hard week ahead.

The drinking of alcoholic beverages in the colonies is prohibited and the resident engineer is charged with seeing that this prohibition is not violated. One of the reasons why passes to Candelaria were so limited was to curtail drinking and to prevent liquor from being brought to the colonies. As mentioned in footnote 3, page 17, drinking, quite surprisingly, turned out to be a very minor problem.

The zone supervisor and his small staff are responsible for obtaining supplies and material for the colonies and transporting them up-river to the ejidos. The zone supervisor and his coordinating engineer make frequent inspection trips to the ejido sites and keep a careful eye on the activities at each site. The resident engineers are young, recent graduates of agricultural schools, and are, in general, quite inexperienced, making close supervision a necessity. Surprisingly, in spite of being young and inexperienced in leadership, these resident engineers have, in general, done a fine job as is evidenced by the progress that has been made.

A paymaster visits each ejido once each month to obtain signatures (fingerprints of those who cannot write) on a payroll which shows the credits and debits of each campesino for his per diem payments and the amount of his charges at the cooperative store. Per diem payments frequently run behind
so that more often than not the books reflect the ejidatarios as being in debt.

The former President of the Republic of Mexico, López Mateos, planned to visit the colonies in September 1964, to present the ejidatarios with the Certificados de Derechos Ejidales, Certificates of Ejidal Rights. 26 These are the usufructs which proclaim the holders to have lifetime rights to the use of the land and that the rights are inheritable.

As was indicated on page 48 above, at the end of 1964, or in the beginning of 1965, the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population plans to release the colonies from his technical direction. When this occurs, the ejidos will be on their own. They will then fall under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Carmen and the State of Campeche for administrative and judicial governmental affairs. The president of the municipality of Carmen will appoint a delegate in each ejido to represent the municipal government of Carmen in the ejido. His function will be chiefly to act as go-between for the people of the ejido and the government of the municipality in any affairs in which the municipality has responsibility. What powers he assumes in the ejido will be based almost entirely on the prestige of his position as delegate unless he is also the president of the local ejidal association executive committee which normally he will be.

26 The writer has no information indicating whether or not this visit was made.
The Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population will continue to maintain a zone office in Candelaria. The zone engineer will provide advice to the colonists, and, in cases of altercation concerning land distribution or in cases of requests to exchange or change land, he will arbitrate the disputes and make recommendations to the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population concerning exchanges or changes in land allocations. He will perform such other duties as the Secretary General may prescribe in accordance with the Agrarian Code and pertinent laws. He will also make periodic reports to the Secretary General on the progress of the ejidos.

The Mexican Government will, of course, continue with the work of constructing roads and irrigation and flood control projects. Only the resident technical supervision will be withdrawn. This includes the withdrawal of resident and agrarian engineers from the ejidos and the discontinuance of payments of per diem allowances after the first crop harvest and the establishment of credit with the Regional Bank of Ejidal Credit. Agronomists and agricultural specialists will continue to visit, advise, and supervise the agricultural development of the ejidos.
CHAPTER V
COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

The information, comments and opinions expressed in this chapter are from personal interviews conducted by the writer with colonists and officials of the colonization experiment and from personal observation.

Unfortunately, the writer's visit to the Zone of the Rivers was unexpectedly and rather abruptly curtailed after formal interviewing of colonists in only one village. This is not to say that colonists had not been consulted on previous occasions while the writer visited the various ejido sites. They had, not in the sense of serious interviewing, but rather generally and briefly and in the company of government officials.

The curtailment of the visit was ostensibly due to an imminent influx of high government officials, both of the federal government and of the State of Campeche, for the purpose of inspecting and observing the project. It was clearly indicated that the colonization officials would have no time to spare for the writer's inquiries nor would transportation to the ejido sites be available to him for approximately two weeks.

Until this time, the cooperation of all of the colonization officials had been given graciously and without stint. But now there was a not-too-subtle change in attitude which began when the writer informed the zone supervisor that he would
like to spend a few days interviewing colonists in the various ejidos. The arrangements for an overnight stay in Miguel Hidalgo y Costillo were abruptly cancelled, but the following day the writer was taken to a different village and allowed to interview for a few hours without any officials being present. There was no indication that any pressures had been brought to bear on the colonists of Venustiano Carranza, the ejido in which interviews were conducted, on what or how they should or should not answer.

Upon returning to Candelaria that evening, the writer was informed that transportation could not be made available for further visits for some time. From this time on, it was noted that the colonization officials in Candelaria ceased to freely volunteer information on the project as they had in the past and that answers to questions became brief and without the usual elaboration that is the normal Mexican custom. Although there is always the possibility that the writer misinterpreted the officials' attitudes and intentions, he concluded, rightly or wrongly, that his presence in the area was no longer welcome. Therefore, he departed with fewer interviews than he would have liked to have had and which he believed desirable.

The Colonists

Since the writer was able to spend only a limited time in the Zone of the Rivers, he found it impossible to establish that rapport with the colonists that would allow them
freedom of expression in answering inquiries concerning their thoughts, hopes, and lives. Even so, some of them seemed to be quite frank with their answers or in discussion. Others were reticent, hesitant, or evasive.

It was not possible to establish ideal situations for interviewing informants. Rather, the writer was forced to visit homes at random and, in some cases, at an inconvenient time for the lady of the house. In most instances, men and women were queried separately. In three cases, husbands and wives were questioned together and, in all three instances, spoke quite freely. All of the women informants were questioned in their homes with, in three cases, a neighbor woman present. This gave an added informant but both were inclined to reticence and evasiveness. Those questioned alone or only with their young children were more open with their answers. As an interesting sidelight, when the writer entered one house, the children tried to hide from him until their mother explained to them that he was not a doctor coming to give them shots. The children later became quite friendly.

The men were more outspoken with answers, opinions, and discussion than the women. Most of them were queried at work, but one group of fourteen, resting in a champón, were enticed into a guided discussion which proved quite fruitful.

In all cases, informants were asked for their names and assured they would not be used without their permission. Some of them had no objection to giving their names or to referring to them by name, but others asked that their names
not be used at all and some would not give their names.

Since all names of colonist informants are not available and in respect to the wishes of those who requested that their names not be used, no personal identification is used in the text. However, the names of those who did not object are listed in the bibliography.

Most of the colonists interviewed were from the State of Coahuila although one from each of the States of Yucatan, Vera Cruz, Michoacan, and Tabasco was interviewed. Some of the comments expressed by the colonists were included in chapters ii and iv and, therefore, are not duplicated in this section.

With the exception of one man, all the informants were unanimous in stating their preference for the new land over their former homes. They all, with the single exception mentioned above, said they would not return to their former places of residence even if conditions there changed for the better. The reasons they expressed for this attitude were the same in all cases, but varied in the importance attached to each.

Those from arid climates were enchanted with the abundance of water, trees, and shrubs, and the fertility of the soil, making this their most important reason for wanting to stay in the Zone of the Rivers next to the all-important one for everyone—that of having their own houses and land of their own to work. This they coupled with the fact that no one had suffered any ill effects from the tropical climate,
nor had anyone suffered from any "so-called" tropical diseases since their arrival in the area. Most of them also said that they thought that the heat in the Zone of the Rivers was easier to stand than that in the northern arid regions.

Those from other areas of the country with similar rainfall and climate placed the prospect of better opportunity for economic betterment, with its attendant advantages for the family, as their most important additional reason for wanting to stay. Of course this was a reason given by all, and is tied in with the abundance of water and soil fertility.

All of the informants, in addition to the reasons given above, placed great importance on the much better housing which they had now as compared to that which they had had before. Most of them had lived in one-or two-room board or bamboo shacks with dirt floors and were greatly overcrowded.

Those interviewed all placed great emphasis on the probabilities for a better life for their children due to the fact that there would be schools in the ejidos, and on their optimistic outlook for better economic conditions.

When they were queried about the cooperative store, the general response was that the necessities available were adequate, but only because their $10.00 (pesos) daily allowance did not allow them to purchase more than their basic food needs. Those with the larger families said they had a more difficult time meeting their requirements for basic foods and were dependent on the supplements they could grow in their gardens and obtain from the jungle. When asked about supplementing
their diet with fish from the plentiful supply in the river, the men replied that they had not had the time to fish or to learn how, but some of the children liked to fish and sometimes caught some. One woman said fishing and hunting were only for recreation and that she did not consider them a source of food. She also stated that she would prefer to buy fish in the store if fish were sold there and she could afford to do so.

All of the women interviewed said they had enjoyed the train trip from Torreon to Candelaria. They agreed that the food on the train was good, the children well taken care of, and that medical attention was adequate. None of them knew of any serious illnesses within their group during the journey. They agreed that the government had done a fine job in transporting and caring for them.

The women informants were asked if they had greatly missed their husbands during the ten months of separation, and if the husband's absence from the family circle had caused any hardships. Most of them replied that they had missed the companionship of their husbands, but because the government gave them $8.00 (pesos) per day, which allowed a bare existence, they did not suffer undue hardships except when the payments (paid every eight days) were late. One woman said she had to sell some of her goats from time to time in order to buy food because per diem payments were late. Most of them had nothing they could sell, however. Another woman—perhaps not happily married—said she did not miss her husband at all.
The men queried on this subject all said they had missed their families very much. They were grateful for all the hard work that made them so deeply tired that they went immediately to sleep when the day's work was done, allowing them no time to think and brood over the fact that their families were so far away.

All informants were asked if they missed their relatives and friends who had stayed behind in their former homes. Some replied yes and some said no. But all of them wrote to friends and relatives from time to time; some did this only as a duty and some because of real affection.

Both men and women informants were asked to comment on the rule banning liquor from the ejidos. Without exception, they agreed that it was a good rule, and they further agreed that they would not like to see a cantina established when the government officials left them on their own. The men said that they had discovered that it was not so necessary or so good to drink so often and that they were just as happy without it. However, they also said that it would be all right to go to Candelaria and have a few drinks once in awhile.

Both men and women had two common complaints which they did not hesitate to express vehemently. First, the roofs on all the houses leaked profusely. They were constructed of wood and concrete slabs covered with tar and sand. The heat from the sun had melted the tar, and it had run through the cracks leaving no protection from the rain. The officials would not allow the colonists to construct thatched palm leaf
roofs over the present ones because the government was obtaining prefabricated roofing material to place over them. In the meantime the roofs continued to leak and no house had a dry spot when it rained. Second, the government was two to three months behind on making per diem payments which kept the colonists overdrawn in the cooperative store and made it difficult for them to know how their accounts were running.

When the men were asked about the confidence they had in the officials with whom they worked, differing replies were received. Most of them said the zone supervisory officials were inefficient, constantly changing their minds and countermanding orders; that the zone supervisor, being a political appointee, was only interested in outwardly doing his job, that he was arrogant and acted as if he had a little kingdom, that he had no real interest in the people, their problems, or their future. They expressed much better opinions of the resident engineers and said that they really tried their best to get the job done, and that they took a real interest in the people. The rest of the informants either expressed no opinion or said they believed all the officials were doing an adequate job. However, without exception, they agreed that the one official who had done the best job and taken the most personal interest in the development and welfare of the project was the agricultural project engineer, Raul Miravete, who was not permanently at the project but made frequent visits in connection with his duties of determining the best type crops to be raised in the area.
All of the respondents were hopeful for the future of the project although some were more optimistic than others. Doubt was expressed by some concerning their ability to succeed on their own when the government takes away its support. Others were sure that with sufficient bank credit they would succeed admirably, always taking into consideration the need to work together.

The men all displayed pride in what they had accomplished. They did not hesitate to point out that when they arrived, there was nothing but jungle where now one sees houses, gardens, and fields full of corn. The women indicated the same pride, but it was directed toward their men who had accomplished so much in such a short period of time.

The Officials

This section is composed of comments from three officials, two of whom worked directly on the projects with colonists and other officials, and one who was an assistant to the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population. The opinions expressed here are concerned with what these three men thought of the project as a whole and what they think the future holds for the colonies. We must bear in mind that the opinions expressed are personal, and not official, but are based on the respondents' knowledge of the experiment, on their knowledge of the bureaucratic processes involved in government and in the National Bank of Ejidal Credit, and on their knowledge of how changes in the federal government
administration have historically changed policies, procedures, and goals.27

The first views expressed are those of Ingeniero28 Severino Mendoza, assistant to the zone supervisor, and co-ordinator of the project. He emphasized that in order to understand properly the importance of this colonization experiment, we must realize that in the whole history of agrarian reform in Mexico, never before had the government given the ejidatarios the means to exploit and develop the agricultural potential of the land through the provision of housing, equipment, tools, seeds, and so on, as was done here. The government had made land available and established ejidos but had never before provided these necessary items to enable the campesinos to get a firm foothold on the land. This meant complete dependence on the National Bank of Ejidal Credit and its regional banks, which did not or could not make sufficient initial credit available to provide for the necessary beginning needs.

This colonization experiment, and its expansion to include the many more ejidos planned for the southern states, depends primarily on two things: first, the attitude toward agrarian reforms of President-elect Ordaz and his administration

27On December 1, 1964, a new President took office. Historically this means that changes in all high government posts, including state governors, will take place, as well as some changes that are not so high. Political appointments in Mexico go quite a distance down the hierarchical scale.

28Engineer--in Mexico, professional people are addressed by their professional title.
when he takes office; and second, the cooperation of the regional banks of ejidal credit. President-elect Ordaz has always favored agrarian development, and it is to be hoped that he will carry on the colonization projects with vigor. If the regional banks provide sufficient credit at the proper times--which they may not--the future growth and development of the ejidos is assured, provided that the ejidatarios work together and try to make a success of their opportunity.

Very few problems of any importance arose during this first year and four months of the colonization experiment. The one major problem was obtaining material and equipment when they were needed. Transportation of these items from the suppliers was very slow. This was almost always the fault of the railroad which would not transport less than carload lots. Many times this retarded progress, but then the time was put into other projects so that in reality too much time was not lost.

At first, some of the original colonists did not want to stay and left the project, but these vacancies were filled later. There were very few problems with the campesinos. They had been completely oriented on what to expect and all the rules and regulations governing what was expected of them had been thoroughly explained to them. Their cooperation was excellent all the way through. However, if there had not been the liquor-prohibition rule, the experiment would not have been so successful.

Ingeniero Mendoza believes that the colonization plan
is a logical and feasible one which will measurably help to solve the agrarian problem of Mexico and add to the economic, social, and political development of the agrarian people if it is pushed forward by the government.

The next viewpoints were expressed by Ingeniero Raul Miravete, Agricultural Project Engineer, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. He was of the opinion that the government made a mistake in having the campesinos construct their own houses and other buildings. He thought that all building should have been contracted, using the campesinos as laborers and, at the same time, allowing them to clear land and plant crops. He stated that this would have given them earned spending money for their necessities, thus relieving the government from making per diem payments. He thought that contracting for building could have been done almost as cheaply and the work completed much sooner. As it is, the campesinos are trained in concrete and wood work, and in other construction activities which was expensive and which developed skills that the majority of the ejidatarios will never again use.

Ingeniero Miravete's view of the future prospects of the colonies are not so bright as Mendoza's. He is afraid government support might slow down under the new administration. At best, he fears, the growth and development will be slow after the ejidos are left to their own devices and placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Governor of Campeche. The progress made will depend to a great extent on the relationship established by the ejidatarios and the
Regional Bank of Ejidal Credit. A great deal also depends on the new Governor of Campeche, who, if really interested in the development of the state, can do much to push forward the development of the ejidos.

Miravete stated that he could see a slow change in the habits and customs of the colonists. They display more hope and pride in their accomplishments than was formerly true. The local people who joined the colonies suffered under the handicaps of ignorance, sickness, inadequate diet, lack of perspective, and no understanding of how to conquer the tropical land and climate. On the other hand, the people from the North were more industrious, used to working hard in order to keep from facing starvation, and, in general, more literate. So far, the influence of the people from the North has prevailed and the local inhabitants have displayed an eagerness to work hard and learn in order to better their conditions of life. Although Miravete hopes that the educational, technical, and other forms of assistance provided by the government will instill and solidify the colonists' will to work, thus enabling them to take advantage of the opportunities with which they have been provided, he fears that, when left on their own, they might slide into a lazier, more lethargic way of life.

He said that one of the big problems for the future was the fact that tropical soils wear out fast and that if the ejidatarios did not take proper care of the soil by rotating crops, allowing the land to lie fallow as necessary, and conform to the recommendations of the agricultural experts, the
hopes for the success of the colonies would not be realized.

However, he stated that from a professional point of view, the colonization experiment has all the prospects for success and can become a great economic and social help to the development of the region.

The last of the officials whose comments and opinions are considered in this section is Licenciado Francisco de la Rosa, Assistant to the Secretary General of New Centers of Ejidal Population. His views coincide with those expressed by the two officials above, but he is, perhaps, more optimistic for the future of the colonization program as a whole. He believes the new administration will carry forward the program with added impetus. In his opinion, the colonists in our project have great chances for success and to realize their dreams of economic and social betterment. Their success will hinge, for the most part, on their own attitudes, work habits, and the cooperativeness which they develop after they are left primarily on their own by the official supervisors. If they establish a good relationship with the Regional Bank, follow the advice of the agronomists, and work hard, displaying honesty and forethought, they will develop a good life, and add much to the economic, social, and political development of the area.

De la Rosa believes that the carrying forward of the whole colonization plan will very greatly influence for the better the economic and social life of the agrarian people of the nation as a whole, and greatly enhance the chances
for political tranquility in rural areas which is a cause of great concern to state and local governments as well as to the federal government.

The Thesis Writer

In carrying out the plans for the establishment of the colonies in the Zone of the Rivers, it was discovered, as expected, that many changes and deviations from the plans as originally conceived had to be made. These ranged from reducing the number of families in each ejido from the originally planned 120 to 99, primarily for budgetary reasons, changing the architect's house plans to include prefabricated roofing, centralizing the manufacture of doors, windows, and concrete blocks, and other changes which the realities of the actual implementation of the plans made necessary.

The writer was quite impressed, and favorably so, with how much had been accomplished in the short space of sixteen months that the campesinos had been laboring on their holdings. This is a particularly noteworthy achievement when we take into consideration the fact that the great majority of the campesinos were completely untrained in construction activities at the beginning and, therefore, had to be taught. Almost all of the housing was completed (except for adequate roofing), the school buildings had been started and were expected to be finished in September 1964, crop lands had been cleared and planted, the medical centers were completed and in operation, and, all-in-all, the ejidos were an eye-filling
sight to behold along what had been a jungle-lined river bank such a short time before.

As one can gather from reading the section on the colonists, page 64 above, the people are, in general, quite content and well satisfied with their adventurous gamble in the tropical jungle. For the most part they are optimistic about the future and are particularly pleased with the prospects that lie ahead for their children.

However, as one could readily see from examining some of the houses and gardens, it was very evident that some ejidatarios were much more industrious than others. Some of the gardens were beautifully laid out and cared for; others were rather haphazard and uncared for, full of weeds and grass. The same type differences were noticeable in the care and cleanliness of the houses. It was interesting to note that the well cared for homes and gardens contained happier, more cheerful, optimistic people.

When so many colonists had told the writer about their leaking roof problems and that the roofing material was available in Candelaria, he made an attempt to determine why it had not been distributed to the ejidos. The effort was really in vain. The zone supervisor was not available—he had gone to Campeche for consultations and did not return until after the writer's departure—and his assistant could not give a satisfactory answer as to why the prefabricated sheeting for the roofs was still in the warehouse.

The writer was also curious as to why the per diem payments
were so often and so long delayed and asked Licenciado de la Rosa about this. His answer was that, although his office had contacted the agency responsible for making the payments several times requesting the payments be expedited and made on time, no satisfaction had been obtained. De la Rosa attributed the delays to typical bureaucratic bungling, but, although he did not think such was the case, he did not rule out the possibility of mismanagement or misappropriation of funds. He insisted, however, that misappropriation was not nearly so prevalent in government agencies as it had been in the past.

Although there are no sound reasons for believing so, except possibly for leaking roofs in the middle of the rainy season, the writer carried away from Candelaria the definite impression that the administrative and operational functions of the zone supervisor's office were not performed as efficiently as one could expect. The writer attributes his unfavorable impression to the fact that he is a North American, used to the demanding requirements of the North American way of life (which, incidentally, he is not entirely in favor of); and to the fact that the zone supervisor was a political appointee and an agronomist, not an administrator or construction engineer, and his chief assistant was a geologist.

The writer's overall impression of the colonization experiment is very favorable. He does, however, have somewhat the same reservations expressed by Ingeniero Miravete and others, that when the government takes away its active support
and supervision the forward progress of the ejidos may slow
down. It is to be hoped that if there is a slow-down, it will
not be so much as to endanger the future development to a
great extent. These campesinos have a great and heretofore
unheard of opportunity to enrich their lives in many ways.
The economic, social, and political advantages that can accrue
to them are tremendous when compared with what they had before
and what so many still have. The writer believes that many
of the colonists realize this and are thankful for it. They
will work and struggle and entice the rest to work and fight
for the great future that lies ahead. They will fight against
those who are lazy and do not want to take on their share of
responsibility and work. They will do all in their power to
make their dream of having a thriving community with prosper­
ous citizens and healthy, literate children come true. The
writer adds his sincere wishes for their success in this en­
deavor.

In the eyes of the writer, this colonization experiment
has proven that it is possible to relocate Mexican people
from one area to another without serious consequences of so­
cial disruption provided that the advantages of the new lo­
cation considerably outweigh those of the area from which
moved. Of course, one cannot say this would be true for all
people simply because customs and traditions vary so greatly
and are more deeply ingrained in some than in others. What
one people can bear without much emotional suffering, may
not be born by others so easily.
The experiment is too recent and has not yet been given sufficient time to allow one to make an unqualified evaluation of its probable success or failure. However, the writer is inclined to take an optimistic view of the future of these colonies. He firmly believes that, given sufficient credits at the proper times, adequate agricultural advice and assistance, and the continued social overhead support promised by the government, coupled with consistent, reasonable effort on the part of the ejidatarios, the project cannot help but succeed. The failure of any one of these will be very detrimental, if not disastrous, to the development of the colonies, and to the economic and social welfare of the inhabitants.

The economic and social improvements that can accrue to the area of the Zone of the Rivers from the probable success of this experiment are many. The betterment of economic and social conditions in the colonies will have a spreading effect on Candelaria and the surrounding area. If the new government administration carries out the plans for additional colonization, as the writer believes it will and should, the economic, social, and political development of the nation as a whole will receive a great boost forward. The present unfavorable demographic distribution will become more equitable, the agrarian problem will become minimized, more and more children will receive more adequate education, means of communication will be expanded, agricultural production will increase, and, in general, more adequate levels will be reached in food consumption, housing, clothing, health, work techniques,
and education. Political unrest in rural communities will be greatly eased, leading to greater tranquility in political affairs. These will all contribute to the social reform that implies the transformation of the Mexican, giving him a new dignity and place in the sun.
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